

# IOWA BIRD LIFE



Vol. XXXVIII No. 2

June 1968

Published by the

IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION

## CONTENTS

BIRDS IN THE DAVENPORT AREA .....	27-46
OTTUMWA CONVENTION .....	47-56
LETTER FROM PRESIDENT NICKOLSON .....	56
FIELD REPORTS .....	57-60
GENERAL NOTES .....	60-62
BOOK REVIEWS .....	62-64
NEW MEMBERS .....	64

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The Iowa Ornithologists' Union was organized at Ames, Iowa, February 28, 1923, for the study and protection of native birds and to promote fraternal relations among Iowa bird students.

The central design of the Union's official seal is the Eastern Goldfinch, designated State Bird of Iowa in 1933.

Publication of the Union: Mimeographed letters, 1923-1928; THE BULLETIN 1929-1930; IOWA BIRD LIFE beginning 1931.

SUBSCRIPTION RATE: \$3.00 a year, single copies 75¢ each except where supply is limited to five or fewer copies, \$1.00. Subscriptions to the magazine is included in all paid memberships, of which there are five classes as follows: Life Member, \$100.00, payable in four equal installments; Contributing Member, \$10.00 a year; Supporting Member, \$5.00 a year; Regular Member, \$3.00 a year; Junior Member (under 16 years of age), \$1.00 a year.

EDITORIAL AND PUBLICATION OFFICE  
 235 McCLELLAN BLVD.  
 DAVENPORT, IOWA 52803

Published quarterly by the Iowa Ornithologists' Union at 235 McClellan Blvd., Davenport, Iowa, 52803. Second class postage paid at Davenport, Iowa. Subscription \$3.00, single copies 75¢.

## Notes Of Birds In The Davenport Area

THOMAS J. MORRISSEY

DAVENPORT

LINE DRAWINGS BY E. W. STEFFEN

CEDAR RAPIDS

### PART I WATERFOWL (Con.)

#### DIVING DUCKS

##### REDHEAD

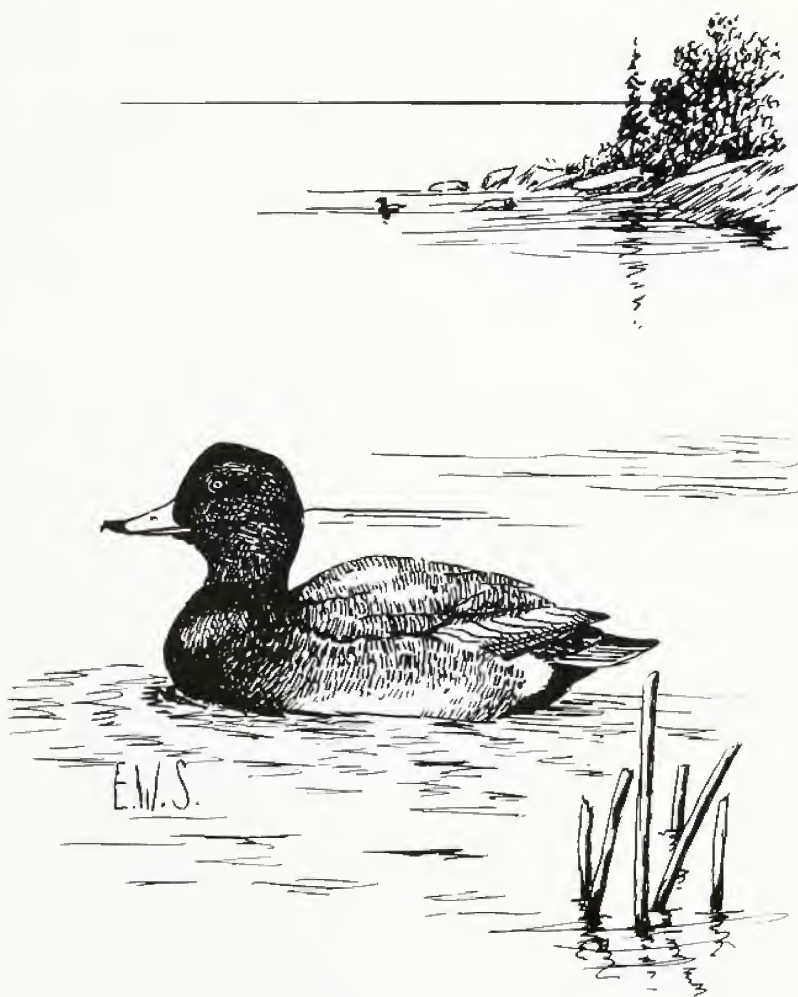
An uncommon spring migrant; a rare fall migrant; recorded seldom in winter.

Redheads appeared during the second week of March. Maximum numbers were attained almost immediately and until the first week in April there was little fluctuation in numbers. During this period from 10 to 25 could be recorded daily. In some exceptional seasons larger numbers were present for a brief period. Thus, from March 25 to March 30, 1949, 50 were present on Credit Island Harbor alone. In late March of 1942 and 1943, 250 to 300 were found with other diving ducks two miles North of LeClaire. After the first week of April, Redheads occurred only as scattered pairs and it was unusual at that time to observe more than five birds in one day. The last stragglers left the area during the last week of April. I was able to obtain almost no data concerning the fall migration of this species. Few hunters seemed to recognize it and my own observations were limited to three records in the third and fourth weeks of November, 1947. These were single males in the company of Ring-necked Ducks. Two males and a female were observed January 7, 1949, between Credit Island and Pelican Island. (Recent Christmas counts have turned up Redheads several times. ed.)

Early migrant Redheads were usually found on the channel of the Mississippi, particularly where the channel broadened to form bays. The shoals around the chain of islets between LeClaire and Princeton and the bay above Lock 14 always had a number of these ducks during March. As the season progressed there was a very noticeable tendency for Redheads to occupy marshes and grassy sloughs. During April, the Princeton Marsh, Grant's Slough near the Stone Valley Club, and especially Credit Island harbor seemed attractive.

Redheads showed little disparity in sex ratio. Nearly all the birds observed in spring were mated. Courtship was infrequent. Occasionally two or more males were seen to pursue a female and when catching up to her extend their necks and heads at a 45 degree angle. They would then voice a loud, cat-like "me-ow." At the time the call was given the upper throat was much distended. This loud call was given only by courting birds. Sexually inactive birds gave occasional mewling and croaking notes. Redheads were usually found in the company of Ring-necked Ducks or less often with Canvasbacks or Lesser Scaups. When disturbed, however, they usually formed into small flocks of their own species. Redheads apparently fed on small molluscs while on the channel of the





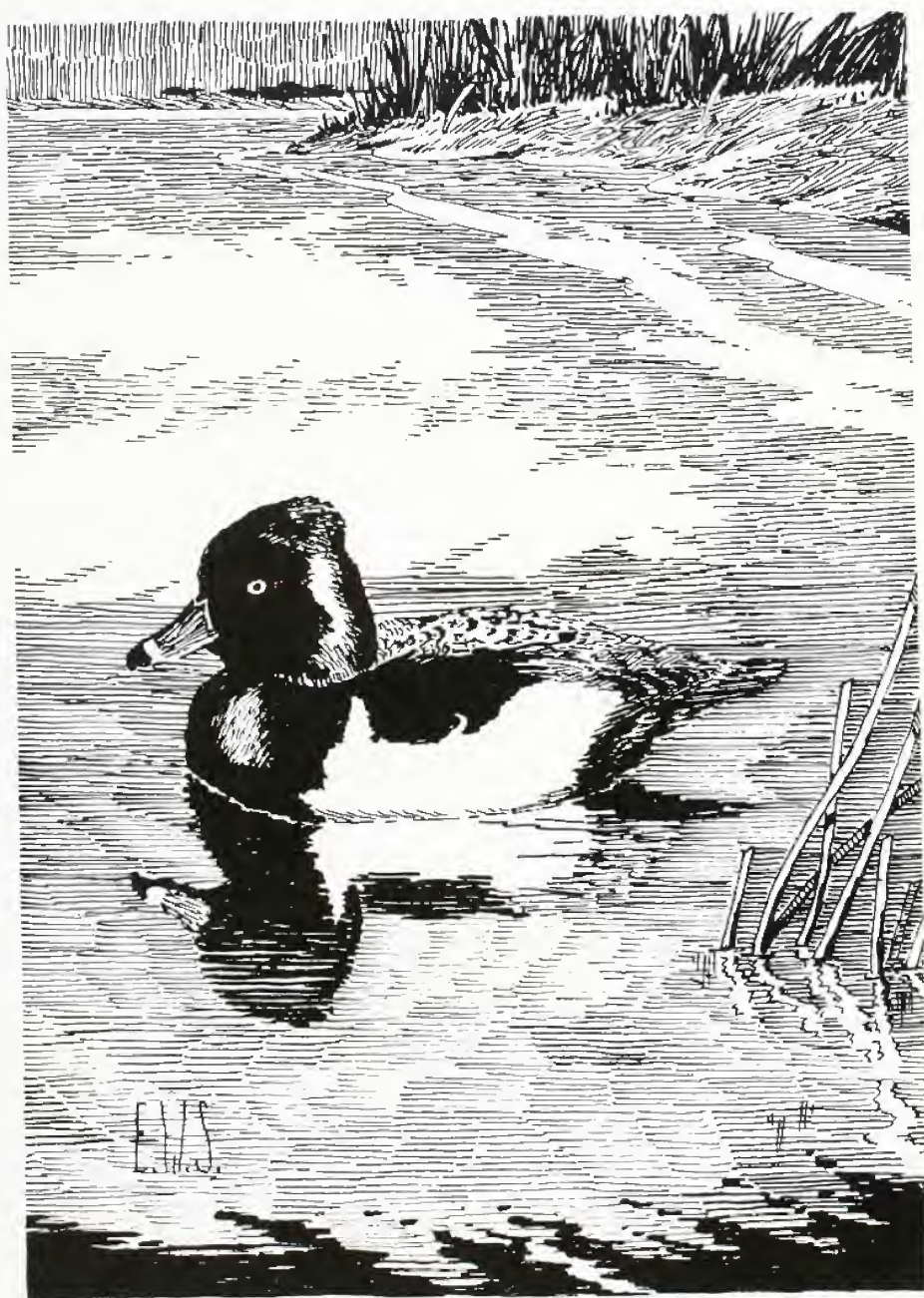
REDHEAD

Mississippi. While on Credit Island harbor they were seen eating gizzard shad and the tubers of LAGITTORIS.

### RING-NECKED DUCK

A common spring migrant; a fairly common fall migrant; rare winter resident.

Ring-necked Ducks appeared in small numbers along the Mississippi during the second week of March. From the second to the last week of March 25 to 100 could be recorded each day. Their numbers increased rather suddenly to reach a maximum of 1000 to 1200 per day during the end of March and the first week of April. At that time 250 were often present on Credit Island harbor. After the



RING-NECKED DUCK

first week of April, Ring-necks decreased steadily until by the third week of that month the last had departed northward. Fall migration began during the first week of October and progressed steadily with neither peaks nor depression in

numbers until about the last week of November. During this early migratory period 25 to 40 ducks of this species were recorded each week. Toward the end of November there was a noticeable wave of this species during which 100 to 150 birds could be observed each day. If the hunting season had ended by that time some of these late arrivals could be expected to remain in the area until mid-December. One male was observed between Pelican Island and Credit Island January 7, 1949; 15 males were observed December 29, 1949, on the Canal above Lock 14. (Over half of Davenport Christmas counts have recorded Ring-necks. ed.)

Ring-necked Ducks were first observed in spring on the Mississippi, but as thawing made ponds and marshes available they resorted to them. They were very numerous on the shoals above LeClaire, on the Princeton marsh, on the ponds along Rock River south of Moline, and on Credit Island harbor. They appeared occasionally on ponds of the river terrace and other smaller bodies of water. On one occasion I found a large flock in dense, flooded timber land near the mouth of the Wapsipinicon--a habitat usually occupied only by Wood Ducks. They were not unusual on heavily wooded sloughs along the Wapsipinicon and the Mississippi.

Ring-necked Ducks showed a high percentage of mated birds early in the spring (although the very first arrivals were usually unmated males). Late March and April birds occurred in the proportion of about three males to two females. No elaborate courtship ritual was ever observed among Ring-necks. A number of males sometimes pursued a single female bobbing their heads and elevating their slight crests. During these pursuits the males uttered soft mewling or peeping notes and occasionally a loud "me-ow" indistinguishable from the similar note of the Redhead. Females, when startled, gave a harsh "quok." They occurred usually in pairs or in small flocks of six to 20 individuals. When other individuals of the species were absent these small groups accompanied flocks of Lesser Scaups, Canvasbacks, Common Goldeneyes, and other diving species. Where large concentrations of this species occurred, as at Credit Island harbor, they kept to themselves, usually preempting the shallowest, inshore portions of the water. The fact that Ring-necked Ducks left the channel of the river for ponds and marshes as soon as these were available suggested a preference for vegetable food. They were observed feeding on smartweed, waste corn, arrowhead tubers, insect larvae, and gizzard shad. Even in the shallowest water they dove when feeding. A number of Ring-necks were killed by scull boat hunters and a few by point shooters on the larger ponds along rivers. Most hunters called this species "black-jack."

## CANVASBACK

A common spring migrant; an uncommon fall migrant; a rare winter resident.

Canvasbacks appeared in small numbers but with great regularity during the first week of March. A sudden influx of migrants during the second week brought the species population to maximum numbers. Almost no change in numbers was noticeable until the last week of March when a sharp decline





CANVASBACK

occurred. In normal years it was unusual to find any Canvasback in the area after the first week of April. The presence of 250 (all paired) on the Princeton marsh as late as April 15, 1950, must be attributed to the extra-ordinarily delayed spring of that year. During most of March 500-1800 of these ducks could be observed each day. The first fall migrants made their appearance during the second week of October. The fall migration was very irregular until about the first week of December; in some weeks none would be observed; in other weeks 10-30 might be recorded. The species became rather numerous in the first weeks of December. In those years in which the hunting season ended in November these late arrivals remained until the final freeze-up of the Mississippi. Up to 150 individuals could be observed at this time. One male was observed

January 7, 1949, off Credit Island; 27 including nine females were observed in the Canal below LeClaire, December 29, 1949. (Encountered as often as Ring-necks on Christmas counts but often in larger numbers. ed.)

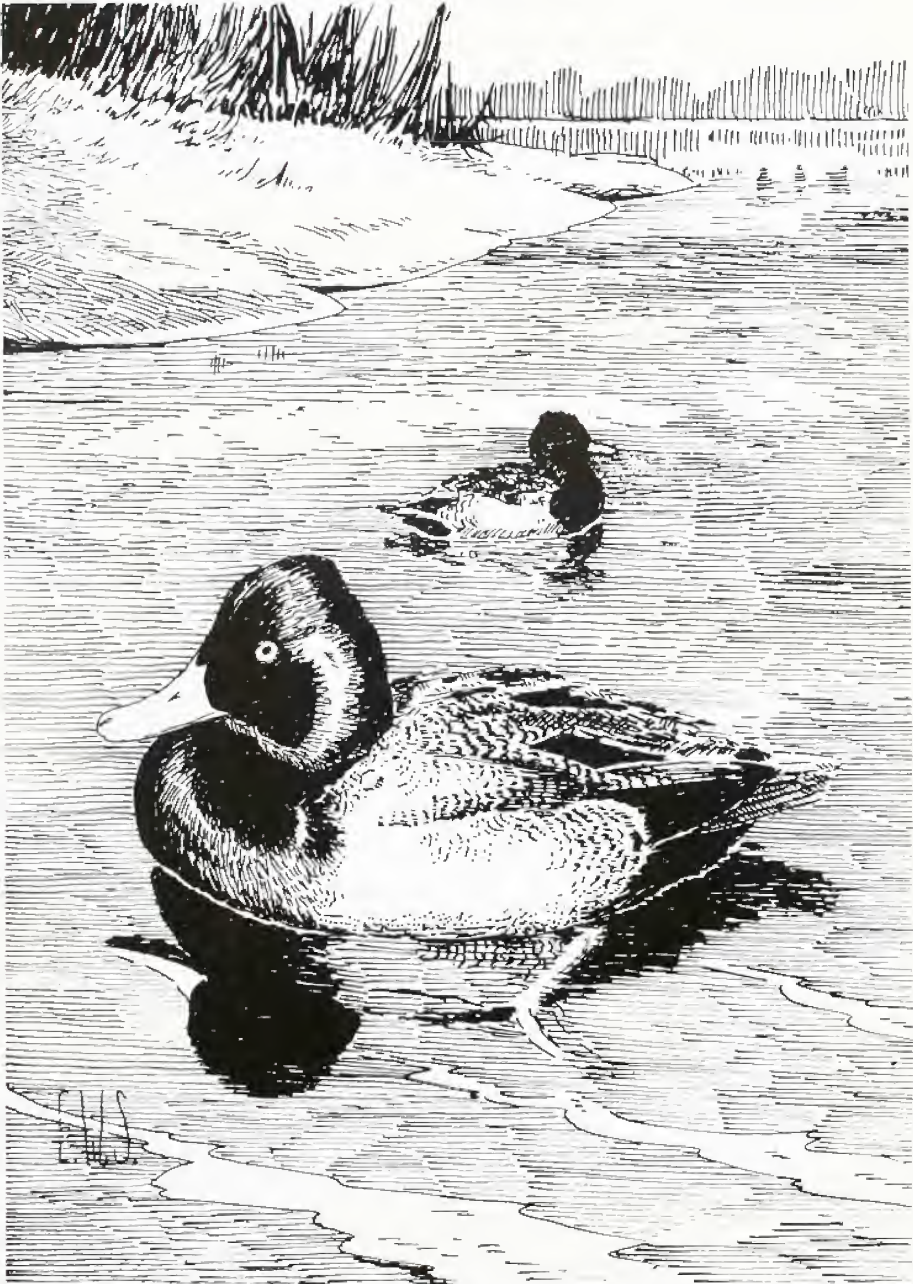
March Canvasbacks were found in largest numbers on the three mile long shoal above LeClaire. They were also seen at other points on the channel, notable above Lock 14. A few visited the ponds along Rock River and Credit Island harbor. When flood waters covered the Princeton marsh in April most of the birds which remained resorted to that area and it was there that the last birds of the spring season were recorded. When at maximum numbers, male Canvasbacks outnumbered females three to one. In late March and early April, particularly among birds found on marshes, there were many pairs and the disproportion in sex ratio was not noticeable. No courtship activity was observed among Canvasbacks. This species usually formed rather large flocks of 60 to 100 individuals both on the water and in the air. Although singles and pairs were attracted to flocks of Lesser Scaups larger groups seldom alighted except to join flocks of their own species. Experienced hunters on the channel usually included a number of Canvasback "blocks" among their wooden decoys. Canvasbacks seemed more curious than other diving species. Although I have sometimes had Lesser Scaups swim within a few yards of me when intent on feeding or courting but in such cases the Scaups were obviously unaware of my presence. On a number of occasions I have approached large flocks of Canvasbacks as they rested on the water. As long as I was moving these flocks swam away from me but on my remaining motionless for five or ten minutes they approached until within 100 yards. Their fully extended necks and searching eyes were ample evidence that they were aware of my presence. Almost all the Canvasbacks killed in this area were taken by scull boat hunters. A few were shot from blinds on the larger ponds but most of these were singles.

### LESSER SCAUP DUCK

An abundant spring migrant; a common fall migrant; an uncommon winter resident.

Lesser Scaup in small flocks of 10 to 30 were recorded regularly each year during the first week of March. In the following weeks more and more birds poured into the area until peak numbers were reached in the last week of March or the first week of April. These notes from spring of 1950 give some idea of the abundance of the species. March 5, 55 above Lock 14; March 18, 1000 between LeClaire and Princeton (5 miles of river); March 26, 5500 to 7000 between LeClaire and Princeton; April 16, 1300 at Credit Island harbor (50 acres of water.) Unlike most other ducks the peak numbers of Lesser Scaup were maintained for a relatively long period. There was not noticeable reduction in numbers until the third week of April. Thereafter they disappeared quite rapidly although small parties and pairs were always present until the third week of May. The population of these late birds were fairly constant. Between 30 to 50 birds were observed each day during this period. Fall migration apparently began during the first week of October and through October 75 to 100 Lesser Scaup could be recorded each day. In about half of the years of this study a marked cold wave accompanied by strong north winds, hail, and snow occurred during the first or second week of November. These storms invariably drove large numbers





LESSER SCAUP DUCK

of scaups before them and for a day or two it was not unusual to record 1000 to 1200. Another increase in population took place during the first week of December and consisted of hardy birds which remained until the freezing of the Mississippi

forced them south. This late fall population numbered about 1500 individuals scattered flocks in at favored feeding grounds on the channel. Three male scaups were recorded February 18, 1949, and one male was seen there January 7, 1949; 55, December 29, 1949, on Canal below LeClaire. 250 at Credit Island and 750 above Lock 14, December 21, 1948,--January 1, 1949. (All Christmas counts since 1950 have included Lesser Scaup with a maximum number of 192, ed.)

The largest numbers of scaup were observed on the channel of the Mississippi but this was by no means their only habitat. They were almost as widely distributed as Blue-winged Teal. Perhaps the favorite habitats of the Lesser Scaup were the large ponds and open sloughs along the Mississippi and Rock River. There seemed to be a tendency for mated birds to frequent marshes and small ponds while the unmated birds remained on larger bodies of water. In May unmated females sometimes turned up on temporary grassy ponds in the company of shore birds. Twice I surprised flocks in flooded timber along the south shore of Credit Island. Unable to fly in these cramped quarters the "blue bills" sank low in the water until only head and "shoulder" were exposed and swam rapidly out toward the channel. From 1938 to 1942 large flocks formed each fall directly above the Government Bridge and Lock 14. A few usually occupied Lindsay Park Lagoon also but in late years scaup have rarely been observed at either locality in fall. They were always numerous on the deeper portions of the Princeton Marsh and small groups remained well into May on the ponds near McCausland and below Nahant.

Wherever large flocks of scaup were found males outnumbered females. This disproportion varied with the season being smallest early and again late in spring. The average ratio was four males to one female. No accurate determinations of sex ratio were made of fall and winter flocks but my impressions were that these populations had about two males to one female. It was also my impression that about three males were killed to every two females during the hunting season. The size of flocks of Lesser Scaup showed much variation. Away from the Mississippi and late in the spring groups of six to eight were usually observed; on the channel of the river the average flock numbered 25-75. A few flocks of 100 to 150 were seen each spring. Fall flocks were much the same except that each fall from one to three flocks of 300 to 400 were observed. One of the greatest thrills I experienced was watching the arrival of flocks of migrating "blue-bills" as they swung down to join flocks already on the water. I remember in particular late one March afternoon as I watched the rafts of ducks flashing black and white on the choppy waters of Credit Island harbor, flock after flock of "blue-bills" dropped down from high overhead to join their fellows. A few of these flocks came from the south, over the island, but most of them came out of the west. I was never able to see these flocks before they decoyed and the first intimation of their presence was the sound of their wings, incredibly loud, like the rush of water. Immediately the birds became visible diving downward on half-closed wings at an angle of 60 degrees and traveling much faster than their usual rate. Then, a hundred feet above the water they suddenly checked their descent and arced wings beating only occasionally they glided the length of the harbor and turned into the west wind to drop with a splash into the water.

Courtship occurred throughout the stay of Lesser Scaup in this area. Occasionally males were seen to puff out their neck and head feathers and bow



and bob their heads before a female. More often the courtship took the form of a pursuit of the female by males while on the water. No courtship pursuits in the air were observed. When sexually active the males uttered a grating noise or growl very much like the noise made by a leopard frog when held in the hand. Hunters used a similar, but higher-pitched, noise to call "blue-bills" but I never heard them use such a call except in late March and in April. Scaup were often noisy at other times but such noises were always chirpings like baby chicks. Large, scattered flocks of scaup reassembled into dense "rafts" at dusk. Twelve hundred on Credit Island harbor usually formed three equal sized groups. Just before dark these birds were extremely active, rushing back and forth on the water.

Gizzard shad formed the largest item of food of the Lesser Scaup which occupied the harbor at Credit Island each spring. Fish which had died the previous autumn and winter were eaten quite as readily as fresh ones. Six or seven inch shad proved too much for one swallow and the unfortunate duck with two or three inches of fish protruding from his bill was immediately set upon and pursued by all his neighbors until he had swallowed his prize or ungracefully shared it.

A few "blue-bills" were shot over points on the Mississippi and on the larger ponds but by far the greater share were taken by scull-boat hunters. The ducks often seemed quite wary when decoying, passing over the decoys several times before alighting. But once in the water they usually allowed the scull boat to approach within easy range.

## COMMON GOLDENEYE

A fairly common winter resident; a common spring migrant; a common fall migrant.

In most winters the resident population of Common Goldeneyes averaged about 400 individuals distributed as follows: 50 near mouth of Wapsipinicon; 50 in front of Princeton; 100 below Lock 14; 50 below Lock 15; 75 off the south shore of Credit Island and at mouth of Rock River; 50 scattered at open water from below Credit Island to the Scott County line. These flocks occupied parts of the Mississippi, which because of dams, wing dams, or swift water, did not freeze in winter. (Industry has added warm water to many areas which provides more open water and about 300 now winter at Lock 14, Riverside Generating Station and the Alcoa Plant, ed.) In open winters the population was greatly increased but it never fell much below 350 birds in any winter. Migration northward was noted as soon as early thaws increased the amount of open water. In most years this occurred during the third week of February. The largest numbers of migrants appeared during the first and second weeks of March when 1200 to 1500 could be counted above Lock 14 and between LeClaire and Princeton. The numbers of Goldeneyes declined steadily through the rest of March and by the first week of April only a few stragglers remained. The last individuals (always females) were observed during the second week of March although one female was seen at Lock 14 on April 24, 1949. Fall migrants were not recorded until





## COMMON GOLDENEYE

the first week of November and appeared thereafter in small flocks every day until the last week of November when they quite suddenly became the most numerous species on the river. In early November from 25 to 40 were recorded daily. After the big flight of November 300 to 400 were recorded daily. The late arrivals remained in the area, resting on the open water above dams and on bays of the Mississippi. All through December their numbers grew until just before the freeze-up as many as 2000 were present from Lock 14 to Princeton. When the freeze-up occurred the amount of open water was greatly reduced and all but the wintering population left the area.

Goldeneyes were found more often on the channel than elsewhere. A few dozen frequented Credit Island harbor and occasionally Credit Island lagoon. They occurred rather often on the pond north of the guide wall at Lock 14. The maximum numbers, however, occurred from Lock 14 to Princeton and on the south shore of Credit Island. Swift water seemed particularly attractive to them even when other water was open and I often found them immediately below Lock 14 in that turbulent current and near rapids and wing dams.

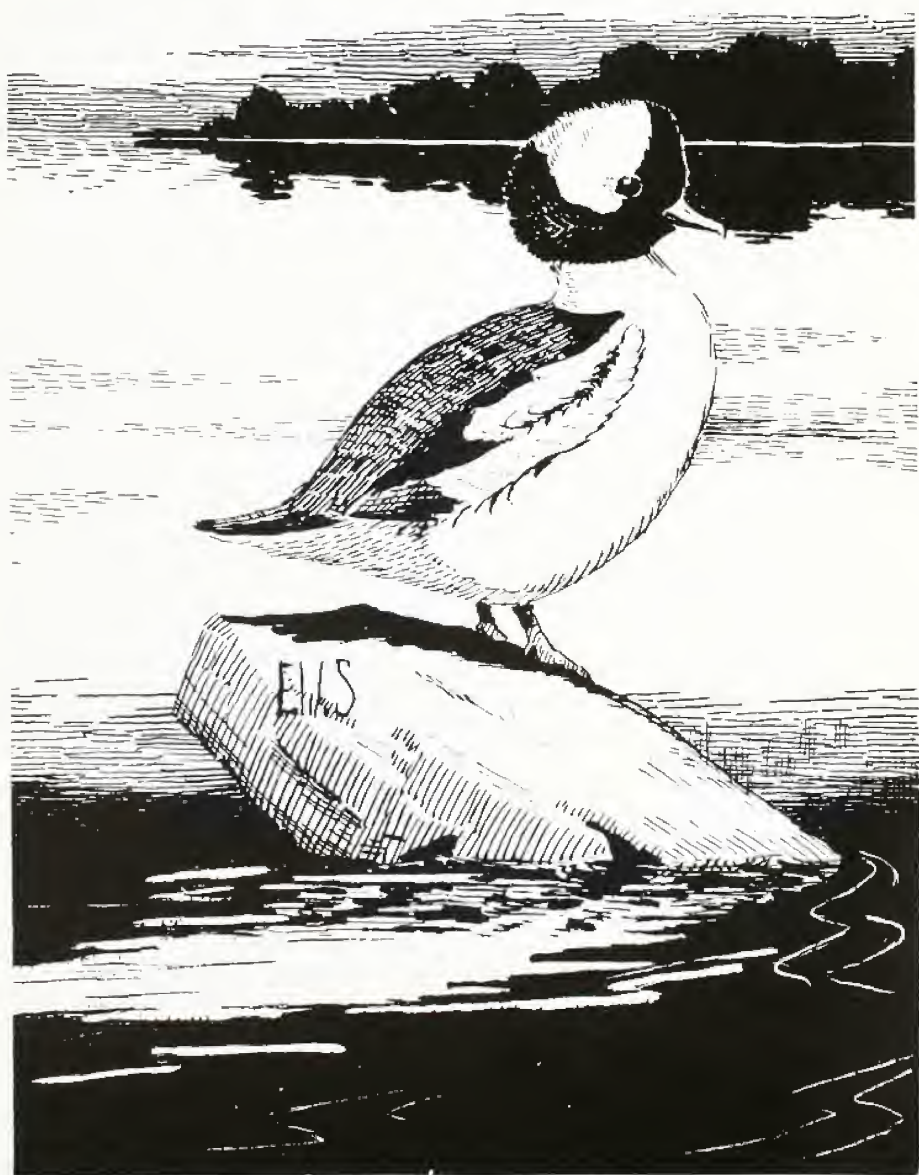
Early fall arrivals were always females and immature males. Adult drakes did not occur in numbers until two weeks after these first migrants. A preponderance of males--about two to each female--was noticeable in winter and spring flocks but was not particularly evident in fall groups. Courtship began very early. As early as the last week of December males were noticed courting females by jerking their heads backward, dabbling their bills in the water, and puffing out their head feathers. At this time the males would utter a note quite like that of a Nighthawk and also a soft chattering reedy "quech" "quech-it." In late February and in March the courtship was a more finished performance. A group of three to seven males would approach one or more females and often much preliminary dabbling and chasing back and forth, one of the drakes would lay his outstretched head and neck backward until they almost touched his back and then jerk them rapidly forward to a normal position. This performance caused some reaction among the other males and for a few minutes all the drakes in the party displayed in this manner.

Immature and female "whistlers" were rather easy to kill from scull boats. They seldom took alarm when pursued by such craft. Adult males, however, seemed much more wary. A few were killed over points and on large ponds but they did not decoy readily and could easily out swim the best sculler when alarmed.

## BUFFLEHEAD

A rare spring migrant; a rare fall migrant.

Whether Buffleheads were as rare as my few records indicate is open to question. Practically all hunters along the Mississippi were familiar with the species although few had killed any in recent years. It was difficult for me to believe that I had overlooked the species during the nine years when I recorded none, especially since I concentrated so much of my attention on ducks. At any rate the situation changed in 1949 and 1950 when I began to find Buffleheads every season. The following records are the only ones I obtained for the species in this area: November 15, 1939: 1 female with Lesser Scaups between Government Bridge and Lock & Dam 15. March 20, 1949: 2 males and 1 female at mouth of Grant's Slough above Princeton. March 31, 1949: 1 female at Credit Island harbor with Lesser Scaups and Ring-necked Ducks. December 11, 1949: 1 male on channel of Mississippi near Princeton, with Goldeneyes. March 26, 1950: 2 males on channel of Mississippi north of LeClaire. March 30, 1950: 3 males on Credit Island harbor. March 31, 1950: 1 male and 1 female on Grant's Slough. April 8, 1950: 3 males and 3 females on Credit Island harbor.



BUFFLEHEAD

(Buffleheads are usually seen several times each spring migration and have been found on several recent Christmas counts. ed.)





## WHITE-WINGED SCOTER

A very rare fall migrant.

As with the Bufflehead I was unable to determine whether my very few records of this species were a reliable index of its true abundance. I saw one female with some Lesser Scaups between the Government Bridge and Dam 15 on November 16, 1939. On October 28, 1940, I observed two immature males on the channel of the Mississippi off Steamboat Island. A few hunters seemed to be

familiar with this species (although I believe others confused it with female and immature Common Goldeneyes) but none were able to furnish me with details regarding its occurrence. One member of the pair observed off Steamboat Island was killed from a scull boat. They were very unsuspicious and allowed a close approach. (Twice recorded on Christmas Counts and found several times during spring migrations recently. Surf and Common Scoters and Old Squaw have also been seen on several occasions in late fall and winter in recent years with two Surf being collected. ed.)



### RUDDY DUCK

An uncommon spring migrant; a fairly common fall migrant.

The first spring migrant Ruddy Ducks arrived in groups of two to seven during the third week of March. They were met with regularly thereafter until the third week of April although never more than 12 were seen in one day and usually only four to eight were observed each week. The last individuals were recorded during the last week of April. Fall migrants arrived during the third week of October, usually as singles or pairs. In November one or more migratory

"waves" of this species occurred during which the small autumn population greatly increased. Flocks of 50 to 100 Ruddy Ducks gathered at such times above Lock 14, above the Iowa-Illinois Memorial Bridge, and above Lock 15. These groups often remained for several weeks if undisturbed. I was unable to determine if these waves coincided with "clear, frosty nights" as described by Trautman (1943). The main body of birds departed during the last week of November although singles or groups of two or three were often noted as late as the second week of December. A single female, possibly a cripple, was observed February 6-9, 1949, in an open lead off Credit Island. (Ruddies have twice been found on recent Christmas counts. ed.)

Ruddy Ducks were observed only on the channel of the Mississippi and at Credit Island harbor. Male Ruddy Ducks outnumbered females two to one at all seasons. The first spring arrivals were males in bright plumage. Mated pairs were not observed until the first week of April. Late April males were usually in dull plumage.

"Ruddies" were very inactive. They spent most of their day asleep, waking to dive vigorously for food for half an hour and then return to sleep. Apparently, this sleep was not too deep for they drifted little with the current but maintained their position even with their heads tucked securely under the feathers of their backs. I remember watching a disgusted hunter trying unsuccessfully to scull his boat up on a flock of Ruddy Ducks which managed to keep out of range without even bothering to raise their heads to look at their pursuer. It would seem easy to kill these little ducks since they allowed very close approach and would fly only when hard pressed (the only birds I ever saw in the air were ones which I had frightened to flight and even this was often impossible). Yet relatively few were killed. They seemed more suspicious of scull boats than of humans and could swim fast enough to out distance all but the best scullers. Even when in range they were hard to kill because they offered such small targets. Besides, they were not well regarded as table birds and most hunters, after one or two experiences, decided that the "butter-balls" were not worth the effort. Ruddy Ducks were very pugnacious. When feeding with Lesser Scaup I have seen them attack these much larger birds in a fury and drive them from the feeding grounds. They were often found in the company of Coots with whom their relations were more amicable.

## HOODED MERGANSER

An uncommon spring migrant; an uncommon fall migrant.

Single males and pairs of Hooded Mergansers first appeared during the first week of March. A slight increase in numbers occurred through March. Until the second week of April one to three groups of two to 12 individuals could be recorded each day. All but stragglers had left the area by the third week of April and these individuals had left the area by the first week of May. Two females were observed June 18, 1949, by Richard Schaefer. There was no evidence that this species bred in the area. (A pair nested in the Wood Duck box in the Princeton area in the early 1950's--see photo. Lewis Blevins, Dale Dickinson and the editor saw a female and three young at Dead Slough near the mouth of Rock River on July 20, 1954. ed.) Fall migrants arrived during the first week of September. From one to five individuals were usually recorded each week of the





HOODED MERGANSER

fall migratory season although toward the first week of December a small increase was noted. All the Hooded Mergansers disappeared during the freeze up of the Mississippi--about the third week of December. (Several have been recorded on recent Christmas counts, ed.)



HOODED MERGANSER LEAVING NEST BOX

Photo by Edwin Meyer

Hooded Mergansers were observed most often along the channel above Lock 14. In December and again in March the pond north of the guide wall to Smith's Island seemed very attractive to these birds. One tiny lead which occurred where a swift current kept the water open between that pond and the boat basin was occupied in three different Decembers by a male or a pair of these birds. They were occasionally observed on Credit Island harbor and on small, open ponds like those occurring along the river terraces near Meridosia and McCausland.

Except for single males observed early in spring and single females observed late in spring, these little mergansers were usually seen in pairs. Fall migrants were less often paired and single males were often met with at this season. Hooded Mergansers decoyed readily and a number were killed each hunting season on the Mississippi and on the larger ponds.



### COMMON MERGANSER

A fairly common winter resident; a common spring migrant; a fairly common fall migrant.

The wintering population of Common Mergansers in normal winters was equal to the wintering population of Common Goldeneyes and was distributed



in approximately the same areas. Apparently there was no wintering flock near Princeton and the flocks of this species below Lock 14 and at Credit Island numbered about 150 individuals each. In extremely cold winters, however, the Goldeneye population declined to 150 to 200 while the population of Common Mergansers stayed constant at about 400. (Common Mergansers are now usually found in about half the number of Common Goldeneyes. ed.) A slight increment in number occurred during mid-February. Large numbers of birds which had wintered to the south entered the area during the first week of March and remained until the second week of that month after which there was a steady decline. At the height of abundance 500 to 750 could be recorded each day. The last individuals were recorded during the second week of April. Fall migrants appeared during the first week of October and were recorded regularly but in small numbers (about five per week) until the third week of November when numbers increased to about 50 each week. Early fall migrants were always females and immatures; adult males were not recorded until the second week of November and did not become numerous until early December. From the first week of December until the freeze-up of the Mississippi 500 to 1000 were observed daily. After the freeze-up only the normal wintering population remained. There were several instances of irregularity in the migration and distribution of this species. For example it was completely absent for periods of a week to ten days in mid-December, 1948, during the last two weeks of February, 1950, and at other times when it should have been present in numbers from 500 to 1000. I believe these absences occurred when unseasonably warm weather to the north opened previously frozen waters. On such occasions our local population moved north and was not replaced. I believe these excursions were but temporary and with the return of colder weather the Mergansers were forced back to their usual winter quarters. Mergansers were frequently observed during winter at altitudes so high as to suggest that their flights were long journeys and not the low altitude "trading" flights so often observed among other wintering ducks. Winter and spring flocks of Common Mergansers were about evenly divided as to sex. These flocks were usually large: 40 to 150 individuals. Fall flocks, however, averaged about seven birds and the birds observed in April were usually in pairs.

Practically all the Common Mergansers recorded were observed on the channel of the Mississippi. They were most often seen above Lock 14 and off the south shore of Credit Island but at sometime or another they were seen on every part of the channel. They were often seen in winter in the boiling, turbulent water below Dams 14 and 15. They sometimes visited Credit Island harbor and the ponds along Rock River. Two pairs spent the first two weeks of April 1938 on Lindsay Park lagoon.

Scull-boat hunters on the Mississippi killed some Common Mergansers and a few were shot over points on the river. I saw at least four times as many females and immatures as adult males in hunters' bags--probably because most males arrived after the season closed. A lock attendant at Lock 14 told me that every winter a number of "goosanders" wandered into inlet and outlet tunnels of the lock and drowned or were trapped. A report by a hunter that a Common Merganser nested and raised a brood on a low, grassy island in the channel three miles above Princeton must have been an error in identification although I saw immature birds there October 1, 1949.



### RED-BREASTED MERGANSER

An uncommon spring migrant; exact fall and winter status undetermined.

Nine spring records of this species were as follows: 1 female April 22, 1943, on Lindsay Park lagoon. 2 males April 15, 1947, on Credit Island harbor. 2 males and 1 female, March 24, 1949, on Credit Island harbor. 1 male and 2 females April 6, 1949, at Credit Island harbor. 1 male April 16, 1949, on pond north of guide wall at Lock 14. 10 males and 1 female April 19, 1949, north of guide wall at Lock 14. 5 males March 25, 1950, on pond north of guide wall at Lock 14. 5 males and 1 female March 26, 1950, on pond north of guide wall at Lock 14. 1 male April 5, 1950, on Credit Island harbor.

Robert Woodmansee found two males killed by hunters on the south shore of Credit Island November 3, 1943. On February 15, 1945, I found 30 with a large flock of Common Mergansers along the south shore of Credit Island. These were the only fall and winter records. The group observed April 19, 1949, was very playful. The males made numerous short dives while chasing one another on the surface and under water. (Seen on ten of the last eighteen Christmas counts. ed.)

# CONVENTION



DR. MYRLE M. BURK  
R.R. #2  
WATERLOO

Lured by the sprinting Road-runner, bird-watchers began coming to Ottumwa, Iowa, Friday evening, May 10. They met in the Admiral's Room of the Holiday Inn at 7:30 P.M. Judge Charles C. Ayres, Jr., greeted the members and related a bit of the history of the conventions. This is the third time that the Iowa Ornithologists' Union has held its spring convention in this community. The first time was during World War II, when gasoline was rationed curtailing the attendance. Six years ago a well-remembered and successful meeting was held here. Again we are welcomed to Ottumwa. Mrs. Ayres, Vice-President, arranged an interesting program for the evening. First she showed short reels of sketches of bird life. These films, obtained from the Audio-Visual Center, included "Life of the Herring Gull", "Birds of Prey", and "Shore Birds" the latter photographed by Dick Borden. These were followed by a Disney film, "Water Birds, A True Life Adventure"; This film was made by the cooperation of the Denver Museum of Natural History and the National Audubon Society; it presented the grace and color of the water birds of the Southwest. Following this refreshing punch and stimulating coffee, served with a variety of delicious cookies, were enjoyed; this was a medium for the liveliest of conversation among old friends and the initiation of newcomers into this bond of freindship which grows with the years.

No directed bird hikes were planned for Saturday morning; some members visited the nearby ponds and fields where Wilson's Phalaropes, Dowitchers, Pectoral Sandpipers and other waterfowl were seen. Others visited the wooded areas. At 9:30, following registration, the members convened in the Admiral Room of the Holiday Inn. Judge Charles C. Ayres introduced Richard Hoffman, Mayor of Ottumwa. Welcoming the visitors to this city, he explained that his beard did not mean that he was a hippy welcoming the flower children, but that it was in honor of the 125th anniversary of the opening of the territory in Wapello County to settlement in 1843. Three years later Ottumwa became a town. Mr. Hoffman is a bird feeder and related his experiences feeding winter birds and combat with thieving squirrels. Sparrows, not martins, used his martin house, so he converted it into a winter feeding tray. It attracted birds and also squirrels. After trying various methods of combating the rodents, he resorted to painting the pole with motor oil. The squirrels efforts to climb the slippery pole ended in their sliding down and a very soiled and greasy fur. Being persistent, in three days they wiped off the oil and were back at the feed! He extended greetings and best good wishes to us for a wonderful time in Ottumwa.

Myra Willis, President, responded; she spoke of our happiness in being in Ottumwa again for our former experiences reveal the excellence of the area for birding. She thanked the members of the Ottumwa Bird Club for their gracious hospitality and their preparations to make this a pleasant meeting.



Mrs. Charles C. Ayres, Vice-president and Program Chairman, now presided over the program. She announced the first paper *Hawks, Doves and Sparrows: Birds in Our Lives*--Dorothy and Joseph Brown, Des Moines. *BIRDS IN OUR LIVES* is the title of a recent book (1966) published by the U.S. Dept. of the Interior. It discusses many relationships between birds and man: esthetic, social, economic and scientific. Text highlights of the book dealing with birds in art, birds in cities, raptorial birds, and bird flight were presented. Color slides made from the book's illustrations and from the author's collection supplemented the text.

The next papers were presented by three students, Miss Gail Bierwaltes, Miss Jean Rossiter, and Miss Nancy Miller. Their research was directed by Dr. David Lyon, Professor of Biology, Cornell College, Mt. Vernon, Iowa. The research was done during the past summer in Oaxaca, Mexico, in a mountainous area of 9300 ft. elevation. These studies consisted of three phases of observing birds which fed on the nectar of flowers.

The Feeding Behavior of the Mexican Flower--piercer, *DIGLOSSA BARBITULA*--Miss Gayle Bierwaltes, Cornell College, Mt. Vernon, Iowa. Tubular flowers, such as Penstemons, Salvia and Thistle, are abundant in this area. The bird, the size of a larger hummingbird, pierces the base of a tubular flower, extracting nectar. To facilitate this it's bill is especially adapted; it is sharply turned upward and hooked at the tip, enabling it to grasp the flower with its upper mandible as the lower pierces the tube. The Flower-piercer frequented open areas created by lumbering. It was located by its song. Four species of hummingbird also occupied this area. There was little aggression between the Flower-piercer and the hummingbirds. Insects, for example, the bumblebee, often obtained nectar from the pierced holes of the tubular flowers.

Flower Preference in Three Species of Mexican Hummingbird--Miss Jean Rossiter, Cornell College, Mt. Vernon, Iowa. The area where the observations were made was an open space of about ten acres, surrounded by trees. Flowers were abundant. The three species studied were the White-eared Hummingbird, the smallest, the Blue-throated Hummingbird, which showed white feathers in flight, and the Rivoli. The flowers were identified to genus and the identifications verified by taxonomists of the Smithsonian Institution. They included a red Iris, a Thistle, three Penstemons and two Salvia. The White-eared Hummingbird preferred feeding on the Iris and less frequently on Penstemon and a small Salvia. The Blue-throated Hummingbird visited the red Penstemon most frequently; it also visited a small Salvia but was not observed feeding on the Iris. The Rivoli fed on the nectar of the Thistle.

Some Territorial and Dominance Relationships in Three Species of Hummingbirds--Miss Nancy Miller, Cornell College, Mt. Vernon, Iowa. Mist nets were used to capture and mark the birds. Major areas were determined according to flower preferences, and the feeding times and perching times were observed for study purposes. The territory was an open area with adjacent trees which provided perches. The Blue-throated Hummingbird territories could almost be defined by the presence of each in his own territory. None would allow any crossing over of the boundary line by the another. Entrances of stray invaders were marked by quick evictions. The White-eared occupied a great variety of areas. It liked the Orange Iris, but also fed on a small Penstemon. It was not attacked by the Blue-throated while feeding. The Rivoli, occupying a large open area, dominated any Blue-throated coming into that area. The Green Violet-

eared Hummingbird was more violently expelled than any other bird. The White-eared Hummingbird is dominated by the Rivoli and the Blue-throated in any territory.

Birds of the Local Scene-- Mr. Edwin C. Cook, Ottumwa, Iowa. A series of excellent slides portrayed species of birds and their natural habitats. They varied from the tiny Golden-crowned Kinglet to the Green Heron, the Sharp-shinned Hawk and Whooping Crane.

Migrant Warblers at Pine Hill Cemetery, Davenport, Iowa--Peter C. Petersen, Jr., Davenport, Iowa. By trapping birds in mist nets movement of birds in relation to changes of habitat was studied. Goose Creek, near the cemetery, provided variety of habitat, with Boxelder trees, Elderberry and other shrubs, patches of Giant Ragweed, water and a brush dump. Nets were placed in various positions in relation to the stream, across the stream, parallel to it and in an adjacent densely wooded area. Results show that birds more frequently fly across the creek than with the flow of the stream. Very good results were obtained in a net placed across a steep cut-away stream bank. He also presented a summary of 31 species of warblers banded in this area from 1959 to 1967, indicating the total number of each species banded each migration season with comments on the period of occurrence.

At this time the members partook of good coffee and more of the delicious cookies. Camera buffs and audience enjoyed the Slide Fest. Participants and viewers enjoyed the pictures, the best that the buffs have made usually during the past year. Those taking part were Myra Willis, Lillian Serbousek, John Osness, Jack McLane, Judge Charles C. Ayres, and Peter C. Petersen showing William Lonnecker slides.

Saturday evening at 6:30 the annual banquet was held in the dining room of St. Patrick's Church. The appointments were fascinating. The ceiling was alive with mobiles of Scarlet Tanagers, made by flying birds suspended by cords from branched twigs. The attractive place mats pictured "Favorite Birds of America." Favors of Scarlet Tanager pins delighted everyone.

Judge Charles C. Ayres, Jr., Toastmaster, introduced the guest speaker, Dr. R. Wm. Poulter of Iowa Wesleyan College, Mt. Pleasant, Iowa. Dr. Poulter is also well known because of his work in the Iowa Chapter of Nature Conservancy. During his tenure as Chairman of this chapter he has located many natural areas throughout the state and has initiated steps for the preservation for posterity, either by purchase, by will, or as gifts. The theme of his address "Creatures of the Wild" was illustrated by his fine photographs of birds, flowers and animals. Particularly fascinating were his accounts of methods used in approaching wild geese, foxes and other animals. In appreciation of this fine talk, he was given a double round of applause.

#### Business Meeting

At 3:30 P.M., Saturday, May 11, 1968, Myra Willis, President, called the first session of the business meeting to order.

Dr. Myrle M. Burk, Secretary-Treasurer, read the minutes of the business meeting held May 13 and 14, 1967. The minutes were accepted as read.

Albert Berkowitz discussed the growth of the Union during the years, which resulted in increased duties and responsibilities for the secretary-treasurer; he suggested that the Constitution be amended to divide this office and have a secretary and a treasurer. After discussion Mr. Berkowitz moved that by amendment of the Constitution the office of secretary-treasurer of the Iowa





TOP - Mayor Hoffman, Retiring President Willis  
MIDDLE - Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Brown, Woodward Brown and Al Berkowitz  
BOTTOM - Editor Petersen, Secy. Hallberg

Photos by Dr. Robert Vane





TOP - Miss Miller, Dr. Lyon, Miss Rossiter, Miss Bierwalters

MIDDLE - Banquet showing Tanager mobils

BOTTOM - Mrs. Nicholson, Dr. Burk, Mr. and Mrs. Nickolson, Dr. Poulter, Judge and Mrs. Ayres

Photos by Dr. Robert Vane

Ornithologist's Union, held by one person, be changed to two offices, having a secretary and a treasurer. Seconded by John Osness. Motion carried.

Dr. Myrle M. Burk read the financial and membership reports. Accepted as read.

Peter C. Petersen, Jr., Editor, gave a report of the publication of IOWA BIRD LIFE. HE reported a decrease in the cost of publication because of the use of offset printing which means the elimination of costs of cuts and engraving. One disadvantage of this type of printing is that it is not possible to use italics and bold face. The covers of IOWA BIRD LIFE will be colored to allow distinction between issues. March will be light blue, June buff, September light gray, and December white. The cost is approximately \$8.80 per page with no extra cost for photographs. He also expressed his thanks to James Clifton of Cedar Rapids for the fine section headings.

The President named the following committees:

Nominating committee	Auditing Committee	Resolutions Committee
Albert Berkowitz, Chr.	George Crossley, Chr.	Woodward Brown, Chr.
Mrs. Sarah Millikin	Lillian Serbousek	Esther Copp
Mrs. Lucile Liljedahl	Mrs. Robert Vane	Jack M. McLane

Field Check Lists must be ordered soon. The following were appointed on the Committee for revision of the present list:

Dr. Robert Vane, Chr., Fred Kent, Joseph Brown.

Dr. Martin Grant, Librarian, is ill. He asked Dr. Pauline Sauer to convey his report to the meeting. Because of other obligations she was not able to attend the meeting and she asked the Secretary-treasurer to convey the report. This was reported to the President. Because of his illness Dr. Grant asks that a new librarian be appointed. When Dr. Grant organized the material, journals, eggs, etc., he concluded that there were two libraries, not one. He considered that some of the journals, etc. belonged to the Inland Bird Banding Association, and some were the property of the Iowa Ornithologist's Union. Willeta Lueshen, Wisner, Neb. is Librarian for I.B.B.A. Dr. Grant proposed that two people be appointed to sort the material, one representing I.B.B.A. and one I.O.U. He suggested Mrs. Lueshen for I.B.B.A. and Dr. Vane (or Peter C. Petersen, Jr. or Myrle M. Burk) for I.O.U. Dr. Grant has sorted and organized the material. Dr. Grant stored the Library in the Museum of the University of Northern Iowa; this was a temporary arrangement. Dr. Pauline Sauer, Director of the Museum, said that the Library must be moved because the space it occupies is needed for Museum exhibits. (Note: Dr. Pauline Sauer called my by telephone. This report was written by me immediately following the conversation in which she relayed Dr. Grant's request.--M.M.B.)

The Life Membership Fund now is \$400.00; it is invested in a Savings Certificate in the National Bank of Waterloo. To study the best investment of this money the following committee was appointed: Robert Nickolson, Chr., Darrel Hanna, Albert Berkowitz.

The committee is to make recommendations to the Treasurer. The President named the following to the Committee on Research Projects: Dr. Milton Weller, Chr., Dr. Floyd Von Ohlen, Fred W. Kent, Woodward Brown, Dean Roosa. The President reported that since the appointment of the Research Committee very little activity has been carried on.

Adjournment.

The second session of the business meeting was called to order by the president at 1:30 P.M., May 12. New members of the Union were introduced.

The President called for the report of the Auditing Committee. George Crossley reported that the book was correct and approved. Moved by Dr. Robert Vane, that the Auditing Committee's report be accepted. Seconded by John Osness. Motion carried.

The President called for the report of the Resolutions Committee, Woodward Brown, Chairman, responded:

Be it resolved that the Iowa Ornithologist's Union express it's deepest thanks as follows:

1. To the officers of the Iowa Ornithologist's Union, namely, Miss Myra G. Willis, President; Mrs. Charles C. Ayres, Vice-president; Dr. Myrle M. Burk, Secretary-Treasurer; Dr. Martin Grant, Librarian; Peter C. Petersen, Jr., Editor; and to the Executive Council, namely, Mrs. Russell Nicholson, Robert L. Nickolson, Fred W. Kent; and Dr. Robert F. Vane, for their work on behalf of the organization.

2. To the Ottumwa Bird Club for its gracious welcome and the efficient manner in which the meeting was conducted, with special thanks to Judge Charles C. Ayres, Jr.

3. Thanks are also due to the following chairman and ther committees: Program, Mrs. Charles C. Ayres, Jr.; Registration, Miss Pearle Walker; Reception and Coffee, Mrs. Blossom Hallberg and Elaine Johnson; Decorations, Mrs. Russell Pulls; to Don Johnson and Ray Fairbank for preparation of maps and other material, and to the capable leaders of the field trips.

4. To the Izaak Walton League for their help in making the meeting a success.

5. To Dr. R. W. Poulter, Dept. of Biology, Iowa Wesleyan College, Mt. Pleasant, Iowa, and to the other speakers who provided the program.

6. To Peter C. Petersen, Jr. for his continuing efforts as Editor of IOWA BIRD LIFE.

7. To Dr. Myrle M. Burk our heartfelt thanks for twelve years of faithful service of secretary-treasurer of the organization.

Respectfully submitted,  
Woodward H. Brown  
C. Esther Copp  
Jack McLane

Moved by Albert Berkowitz that resolutions presented be accepted. Seconded by Dr. Robert Vane. Motion carried.

The President called for the report of the nominating committee. Albert Berkowitz reported these nominations:

Robert L. Nickolson, President  
Mrs. Robert (Jean) Vane, Vice-president  
Mrs. M. K. Hallberg, Secretary  
Woodward H. Brown, Treasurer  
Miss Frances Crouter, Librarian  
Peter Petersen Jr., Editor  
Executive Council Mrs. Russell Nicholson  
Mrs. Charles C. Ayres, Jr.  
Kelth Layton  
Myra Willis



Moved by Albert Berkowitz that nominations cease and the secretary be instructed to cast an unanimous ballot. Seconded by Lillian Serbousek. Motion carried.

Moved by Jack McLane that the Secretary send notes to John Paul Moore and Dr. Martin L. Grant expressing our heartfelt sympathy. Seconded by E. W. Mudge, Motion carried.

Woodward H. Brown reported that, contrary to rumors, he was still in charge of compiling migratory data. He requested that reports from members reach him before the 25th day of May.

Dr. Myrle M. Burk, retiring Secretary-treasurer, thanked the members of the Union for their thoughtfulness and cooperation during her tenure of office, and for the interesting letters.

Myra Willis, retiring President, expressed her appreciation for the cooperation received during the past two years.

Compilation of birds observed led by Beryl Layton.

#### Bird Hikes

Sunday morning at 4:45, the bird watchers met at the Izaak Walton League Club House for a delicious breakfast, served by the Izaak Walton Leaguers.

After breakfast they visited the good birding areas, Arrow-wood Camp, wooded areas, and the ponds near Ottumwa. After hiking through these areas during the morning and listing 120 species they returned to the Izaak Walton League Club House. They were most appreciative of the excellent luncheon served by the Izaak Walton League.

#### Compilation of Birds Seen May 12.

Great Blue Heron, Green Heron, Little Blue Heron, Mallard, Gadwall, Blue-winged Teal, Wood Duck, Turkey Vulture, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Sparrow Hawk, Wild Turkey, Bob-white, Ring-necked Pheasant, American Coot, Semipalmated Plover, Killdeer, Upland Plover, Spotted Sandpiper, Solitary Sandpiper, Greater Yellow-legs, Lesser Yellow-legs, Pectoral Sandpiper, White-rumped Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, Short-billed Dowitcher, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Wilson's Phalarope, Black Tern, Mourning Dove, Great Horned Owl, Barred Owl, Whip-poor-will, Nighthawk, Chimney Swift, Belted Kingfisher, Yellow-shafted Flicker, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Red-headed Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Eastern Kingbird, Great Crested Flycatcher, Eastern Phoebe, Traill's Flycatcher, Least Flycatcher, Eastern Wood Pewee, Horned Lark, Tree Swallow, Bank Swallow, Rough-winged Swallow, Barn Swallow, Purple Martin, Blue Jay, White-breasted Nuthatch, Common Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, House Wren, Mockingbird, Catbird, Brown Thrasher, Robin, Wood Thrush, Swainson's Thrush, Gray-checked Thrush, Veery, Eastern Bluebird, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Loggerhead Shrike, Starling, White-eyed Vireo (Kathy Fisher), Bell's Vireo, Yellow-throated Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo, Warbling Vireo, Golden-winged Warbler, Blue-winged Warbler, Tennessee Warbler, Orange-crowned Warbler, Nashville Warbler, Parula Warbler, Yellow Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, Myrtle Warbler, Black-burnian Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Blackpoll Warbler, Palm Warbler, Ovenbird, Kentucky Warbler, Yellow-throat, Wilson's Warbler, American Redstart, House Sparrow, Bobolink, Eastern Meadowlark, Western Meadowlark, Red-winged Blackbird, Orchard Oriole, Baltimore Oriole, Common Grackle, Brown-headed Cowbird, Scarlet Tanager, Cardinal, Rose-breasted Grosbeak,

Indigo Bunting, Dickcissel, American Goldfinch, Rufous-sided Towhee, Savannah Sparrow, Grasshopper Sparrow, Vesper Sparrow, Tree Sparrow, Chipping Sparrow, Field Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow and Song Sparrow. Total 120 species.

#### Registered Attendance

BURLINGTON--Alice Berg, Peter Lowther, Jack McLane; CEDAR FALLS--Frances Crouter, Mrs. Lloyd Lyons, Mr. and Mrs. Oren F. Paine, Mrs. Charles Schwanke, Maxine Schwanke; CEDAR RAPIDS--Mr. and Mrs. Beryl Layton, John Layton, Sarah L. Millikin, Lillian Serbousek, Dr. and Mrs. Robert Vane, Myra G. Willis; DAVENPORT--Mr. and Mrs. Peter C. Petersen, Jr.; DES MOINES--Albert Berkowitz, Mrs. A. J. Binsfield, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Brown, Woodward Brown, Mrs. Jay M. Lynch, Mrs. Russell Nicholson; DUBUQUE--Mr. and Mrs. George Crossley, Phyllis Shultz, Ival Schuster; FAIRFIELD--Daniel T. Bloom, Viola Hayward, Margaret Herdliska; GRINNELL--Helen Stewart, Mildred Stewart; HAMBURG--Mrs. Edward Getscher; KILDUFF--Ann Moore; LAMONI--Mrs. Madelaine Ballantyne, Grace Elswick; MARENGO--Mr. and Mrs. R. R. Schroeder; MARION--Mrs. Lillian Liljedahl; MARSHALLTOWN--Mr. and Mrs. Russell Prescott, Ruth Zorn; MT. PLEASANT--Dr. R. Wm. Poulter; MT. VERNON--Gayle Bierwaltes, Dr. David Lyon, Nancy Miller, Jean Rossiter; NEWTON--Mr. and Mrs. Owen J. Lair; OSKALOOSA--Mr. and Mrs. Keith Layton; OTTUMWA--Judge and Mrs. Charles C. Ayres, Jr., Dr. and Mrs. Glen Blome, Mr. and Mrs. Edwin G. Cook, Larry Deeds, Mr. and Mrs. Ray Fairbank, Mary Ann Fairbank, Lorraine Gilroy, Mr. and Mrs. H. K. Hallburg, Gwen Hale, Leona Havens, Mr. and Mrs. Donald G. Johnson, Cyril Lamb, Beulah Miksch, Mr. and Mrs. J. Donald Rowe, Pearle Walker; PRESCOTT--Mrs. George Hermansen; SEYMOUR--Mrs. R. L. Scott; SHENANDOAH--Mrs. Wallace DeLong; SIOUX CITY--Mrs. W. W. Barrett, Mr. and Mrs. Darrel Hanna, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Nickolson; WATERLOO--Dr. Myrle M. Burk, Ruth Halliday, Mrs. Maybelle Hinkley, Mr. and Mrs. John Osness; WEST CHESTER--Mrs. Richard Fisher, Kathy Fisher; WHEATLAND--Esther Copp; WINTHROP--Fred Pierce; LA MOILLE, MINN.--Pauline Wershofen, Mrs. Violet Nagle; LINCOLN, NEB.--Mr. and Mrs. Harold V. Whitmus; DALLAS, TEXAS--Mr. and Mrs. E. W. Mudge.

NESTING INFORMATION WANTED. The species listed below are sometime summer residents; for some there are nesting records, and for others no nestings have been reported. Our knowledge of the nesting habits of all of these is incomplete, and the members are asked to help fill the gaps by reported any observed nesting.

Horned Grebe  
Eared Grebe  
Common Egret  
Black-crowned Night Heron  
Yellow-crowned Night Heron  
Ring-necked Duck  
Bufflehead  
Hooded Merganser  
Cooper's Hawk  
Broad-winged Hawk  
Swainson's Hawk  
Peregrine Falcon

Piping Plover  
American Woodcock  
Common Snipe  
Wilson's Phalarope  
Franklin's Gull  
Burrowing Owl  
Long-eared Owl  
Short-eared Owl  
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker  
Western Kingbird  
Say's Phoebe  
Acadian Flycatcher



Least Flycatcher  
Brown Creeper  
Bewick's Wren  
Veery  
White-eyed Vireo  
Blue-winged Warbler  
Parula Warbler

Cerulean Warbler  
Louisiana Waterthrush  
Summer Tanager  
Blue Grosbeak  
Savannah Sparrow  
Henslow's Sparrow  
Clay-colored Sparrow

Any report giving the date, location, and success or lack of success of any nest will be appreciated. In the case of colonial nesters the approximate number of nests should be given. WOODWARDH. BROWN, 4815 Ingersoll Ave., Des Moines, 50312.

## Letter From President Nickolson

Dear I.O.U. Members,

I have been a member of the I.O.U. for nearly twenty years, joining in 1949, and serving on the executive council for many years. I feel it is a great honor to have been elected president of the I.O.U. and I would like to thank you for your vote of confidence. With the help of the officers and the executive council I hope we can make the I.O.U. continue to grow.

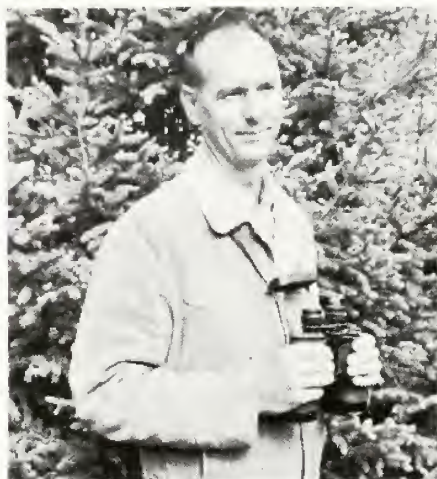
I feel one of our most important functions is to help encourage young people to take an interest in ornithology and become active in this field. I was encouraged at a young age by an outstanding ornithologist

and member of the I.O.U., the late Zell C. Lee. I feel without this help I may not have continued my interest in birding. In this modern age it seems to be increasingly difficult to interest young people in nature and conservation. Therefore, I believe we should all make an extra effort to promote the ideas and principles of the I.O.U. among other people so our organization will be here for future generations.

I believe it is also important that members of I.O.U. attend the spring and fall conventions held throughout the state. It is only by your attendance that the club can continue to be strong and active. I would also like to stress the importance of our publication, IOWA BIRD LIFE. We should all try to contribute our accurate bird observations and records to our Editor so that IOWA BIRD LIFE will continue to be an excellent representation of Iowa ornithology.

If there are any questions or ideas for improving our organizations, please do not hesitate to contact me or the officers of the I.O.U.

I hope to see you all at the fall meeting.



Sincerely,  
Robert L. Nickolson



## FIELD REPORTS



March and April were warm with May cooler than normal. Precipitation was sub-normal with no flooding and a lack of mudflats for waders. Oaks leafed out early, with elms later and the warblers seemingly waited for the latter. Unusually windy weather prevailed, with some severe wind and hailstorms. Some of the comments: "No really noticeable waves, best days were 7, 15, 22, 23 and 26 May, the final week of May equaled the entire earlier portion of that month." (PP). "No large variety, no real big waves." (PL). "Generally poor weather responsible for a low count." (RM). "Dry weather may have had an effect." (DG). Still, on a chilly and overcast 9 May, Fred Kent had 21 warblers in a list of 119 species, and a list of 110 on the following day. There were several reports of partial albinism: A Coot (RH); Robins (EG, RH); Swainson's Thrush and Common Grackle (PL); and a Red-winged Blackbird (RM).

GREBES, PELICANS. Eared Grebes were reported at Lake Manawa on 5 May (DH); four were seen at Webster City (RM); with several sightings at Des Moines. A flock of 50 White Pelicans had an extended stay on Lake MacBride in May (FK), and 25 were on Big Wall Lake on 4 May (RM).

HERONS. Great Blues were thought scarce (FK, DH, RM, WHB), but 40 were seen at Harper's Ferry on 30 March by Glen Bloomfield (RH). One of the few Green Heron reports is of an early one seen 26 March by Don Preble (RH). Common Egrets were: 17 April (DG); 21st, 2 (RH), and 28th, 2 by Larry Fabian (RH).

GEESE. About on schedule with a very large flight on 23 March (DH); good numbers in a fine migration with 100 White-fronted near Pocahontas on 7 April (RM); 2-4,000 at Princeton Marsh from 10 to 15 March (PP).

DUCKS. Not as many, but good variety (RM); plentiful from mid-March through April (MK); migration disappointing (PK); but thought generally good (HB). An estimated 20,000 were seen at Sweet's Marsh on 23 March (RH). Mallards: thought up (MK). Pintails: greatly increased over last year (JF). Green-winged: increased in numbers (RM). Blue-winged: down somewhat (MK), good numbers (KL). A Cinnamon Teal was found by Albert Berkowitz at Des Moines on 21 April. Shoveler: again abundant (MK), good numbers (KL, WHB). Redhead: may be up some (DH), a flock of 50 on 19 March, (FK), 150 seen on 23 March (RH), a considerable increase at Des Moines. Canvasback: none seen (DH), 60 on 23 March (RH), and several reports at Des Moines. Scaup: a concentration of 2,000 on 13 April (FK). Barrow's Golden-eye: Edwin Franks reported a male on the Mississippi at Nauvoo, Ill. was seen by Bill McKinnis and him on 14 March. Bufflehead: an unusually large number of these were seen all spring in the Des Moines area. Mergansers: 50 Common and 15 Hooded were at Sweet's Marsh on 23 March (RH).

HAWKS. Most reports said none or few, but Mr. and Mrs. Hanna saw about a dozen between Sioux City and Ottumwa, Red-tailed and one Marsh Hawk. Turkey Vultures: arrived early at the Ledges with 17 at one roost (JF); 6 were

seen there on 20 April (RM); 12 at Harper's Ferry on 30 March, seen by Glen Bloomfield (RH); 6 at Decorah on 30 March by Larry Fabian (RH), and 8 observed on 1 May with 2 or 3 seen on most clear days in April (DG). Sharp-shinned: 3 banded, one on 18 March, 25 March, and 3 May (PP). Red-tailed: the only hawk seen in numbers (RM), and fairly common (KL). Red-shouldered: 1 each on 23 March and 21 April (RH) for the only report. Golden Eagle: 1 on 28 March (HMCK). Bald Eagle: one on March 11th (PL); immature on 13 February and adult on 18 March (HMCK); 2 at Goose Lake, Hancock Co. 26 March (JF); and 1 in Yellow River Forest on 2 March by Nick Osness and Larry Fabian (RH). Marsh Hawk: 2 on 30 March (RH), in addition to the Hannas'. Osprey: 4 were seen by Hays, 1 each on 13 and 16 April and 2 on 21 April; 4 by Glen Bloomfield on 16 April, and 1 by Albert Berkowitz on 4 May. Pigeon Hawk was well seen at Sweet's Marsh by Mrs. Hewitt and Hays on 30 March.

**GROUSE, BOBWHITE, PHEASANT, TURKEY.** A Ruffed Grouse and 11 Turkeys were seen in the Yellow River Forest on 2 March by Nick Osness and Larry Fabian (RH). Bobwhite are plentiful (KL). Pheasants: seem numerous (DH), best population in years (RM), and scattered (KL).

**SHOREBIRDS.** Killdeer: more than 100 at Hudson on 6 April (RH), and 50 on 29 March (DG), but seemed fewer (MK). Black Rail: a positive identification, studied at 10 feet (GB) (no date given). Gallinule: 1 seen on 11 May at Anderson Lake near Jewell (RM). Coot: All reports mentioned unusually large flocks. Golden Plover: a large flock observed "in eastern Iowa" by Gertrude Weaver (DH). Killdeer: more than 100 at Hudson on 6 April (RH), and 50 seen on 29 March (DG). Ruddy Turnstone: 4 on 20 May (FK). Woodcock: courtship performance watched several times (PP, FK), 3 seen on 4 May (HMCK), 3 on 1 April by Jim Lauterback (RH), and a sighting of 4 young reported on 28 April to Fred Kent. Snipe: Almost 100 were seen on Otter Creek on 6 April (RH). Upland Plover were reported (PP, RH, DG, RH). Don Prebie reported an early one seen on 26 March. Willet: observed in the Waterloo area by Mrs. Velie and Mrs. Hewitt (RH), with several sightings at Des Moines. Dowitcher: in larger numbers than usual with 50 on 18 May (FK), a flock of 28 on 22 May with several smaller groups earlier at Des Moines, and 4 seen by Glen Bloomfield on the early date 6 April (RH). Buff-breasted Sandpiper: a flock of 15 on 17 May were seen (EB), and a flock reported in eastern Iowa by Gertrude Weaver (DH). Marbled Godwits: reported (JF, DG). Hudsonian Godwits: 2 at Anderson Lake (RM), and several small flocks at Des Moines. Wilson's Phalaropes: 200 Wilson's seen by Bob Nickolson and Eldon Bryant (DH), with a good-sized flock and several smaller groups at Des Moines. The rare Northern Phalarope was reported, 8 on 20 May (FK) with 15-20 in with a similar number of Wilson's at Des Moines on 20 May.

**GULLS, TERNS.** Franklin's: a few more (RM). Bonaparte's: 15 seen 22 April (HMCK). Black: several reports of very large flocks.

**CUCKOOS, OWLS.** Cuckoos have been exceedingly scarce, the only reports being of one Yellow-billed (PL) and both species on 14 May (RM). Burrowing Owl has been found on the Diggs' farm near Hamburg (EG). Long-eared: 5 at Dunbar Slough 8 March (JF). Short-eared: only a single seen twice in March and April (DG).

**WHIP-POOR-WILLS, NIGHTHAWKS, WOODPECKERS.** At least 5 Whip-poor-wills in the Ledges area on 7 May (JF). The first banded was on 12 April (PP). A Nighthawk on 9 May was early (PP). Reports on Flickers mentioned



an unusually heavy migration (MK, RH, RM, KL). There were similar comments on Red-headed Woodpeckers (FK, EG, KL). Sapsuckers were in good numbers on 17 April and 3 May (PP).

**FLYCATCHERS, SWALLOWS.** Smaller flycatchers plentiful, but the larger species seemed late (MK). An unusual number of Empidonax in Des Moines. Eastern Kingbirds: 250 seen on 18 May (RM). Crested: late and few (RM, WHB). Say's Phoebes show a small increase after two poor years (EB). An Eastern Phoebe on 18 March was early (PP). Yellow-bellied: First 3 banded on 22 May (PP). Acadian: banded 8, 15, and 16 May (PP). An early Wood Pewee on 18 April (DH). Swallows were thought in the largest numbers ever, with flocks of thousands (RM). Tree: seemed to arrive early with 6 on 30 March (RH), and a dozen on the 31st (FK). Bank: appeared to be only half as many as last year (EG). Barn: plentiful, but Cliff absent (KL). A good flock of Cliff at Des Moines on 26 May. Purple Martins are few (GB, MK, KL, WHB).

**JAYS, CROWS, WRENS.** More than 500 Blue Jays were seen in one-half hour at the Ledges on 1 May (JF). Crows have definitely decreased, possible due to hunting pressure according to Wm. Felton (DH). A Winter Wren was seen and heard singing on 28 April (RH). Bewick's on 8 and 22 April were the first in five years (PL). A few pairs of Carolina Wrens are in the same locations (PL), and have been heard (FK).

**MIMICS, THRUSHES.** There are no Mockingbirds in the field where there have been two pairs before (GB), but 2 or 3 are reported from the Waterloo-Cedar Falls area (RH). Robins are again having a good season in several places. a Hermit Thrush seen 3 April by Mrs. Hewitt was early (RH). Swainson's: Most commented on the unusually large numbers. Most came rather late but stayed for a longer time than usual at Des Moines. A good flight of Gray-cheeked (EB). Bluebird nestings down due to too many House Sparrows and predators (GB), and also down (KL).

**KINGLETS, PIPITS, SHRIKES.** Lots of Kinglets this year (FK); a great many (RH); Ruby-crowned abundant since mid-March, but no Golden-crowned (MK); no Golden-crowned and Ruby-crowned in small numbers (RM). Water Pipits are fewer with only 1 seen (DG). Loggerhead Shrikes are scarce from all reports (GB, EB, PK, KL).

**VIREOS, WARBLERS.** Most reports of vireos are unfavorable: 4 Solitary but none of the others (RM); just arriving on 21 May (EB); all vireos way down (MK); only one Solitary (KL); no reports of Red-eyed (DH); diminished this year (PK); and none (KL). There was a good movement of Philadelphias with a peak of 6 banded on 22 May and the best movements were in late May (PP). Lots of Warbling (DH). There is considerable variation in the reports of warblers, especially as regards dates of arrival. Warblers scarce, except Tennessee (GB); good flights on 5-7 and 13-15 May (DH); best wave in Des Moines 18-19 May; 21 species on 9th and a wave on 26th (FK); 20 species on the 11-12 week-end (RM). Tennessee: a wave on 18th (RM); lots (KL). Yellow: above average (KL, WHB). A Cape May banded on 7 May (PP). Chestnut-sided and Bay-breasted scarce and only 2 Blackpoll (KL), but lots of the latter at Des Moines. A Kentucky and a Carolina Wren singing at the same time were heard by Fred Kent who also had a singing Connecticut. Mourning: much more plentiful (MK). It is unusual to have three reports of the Hooded: 1 May, Mrs. Velie and Mrs. Hewitt (RH); 28 April singing and well seen by Tom and Fred Kent; 20 May, an excellent view of 20 feet of a male by Mary Lou Petersen in their yard (PP). Redstart:



noticeably absent (DH).

**ICTERIDS, FINCHES.** Bobolink: unusually large numbers near Des Moines. A nest of a meadowlark (sp?) was parasitized by a Cowbird (GB). Yellow-headed: seem more (DH). Red-winged Blackbird: increased decidedly (DH); thick (KL); but, fewernests (GB). Brewer's Blackbird: a small flock seen on 21 March (MK). Grackle: increased decidedly (DH); plentiful as ever (MK); and continuing to increase in Des Moines. Late, with only a few hundred on peak days instead of 15-20,000 seen in other years (PL). Scarlet Tanagers scarce and no Summer Tanagers (KL). One male Summer Tanager is the only Des Moines report. Blue Grosbeak: 2 pairs found west of Mapleton (EB); 1 seen on 17 May (HMCK). Dickcissel: back in good numbers (GB); an early one on 10 April by Mrs. J. Osness (RH); only 1 so far (RM). Goldfinches are increasing according to reports. Towhee: one of the spotted variety spent some time in the area (EG); in good numbers (RM); few, if any seen in Des Moines. A Painted Bunting banded at the Diggs' farm (EG). A Clay-colored Sparrow on 4 May was unusual in Des Moines. White-crowned: none seen (EB); a late one on 24 May (PK). White-throated: very few (EB); abundant (MK); in great numbers with 200 on 28 April (RH). Lincoln's and Swamp: up slightly (MK).

**Contributors:** Mrs. Gladys Black, Pleasantville; Eldon Bryant, Akron; John Faaborg, Jefferson; Mrs. Edwin Getscher, Hamburg; Donald Gillaspey, Lamoni; Mrs. Darrell Hanna, Sioux City; Russell Hays, Waterloo; Milford Keeler, Mason City; Fred Kent, Iowa City; Pearl Knoop, Marble Rock; Keith Layton, Oskaloosa; Peter Lowther, Burlington; Howard McKinley, Russell; Ron Mullenburg, Webster City; Peter C. Petersen, Jr., Davenport. **WOODWARD H. BROWN**, 4815 Ingersoll Ave., Des Moines, Iowa 50312.

## GENERAL NOTES



**"A FLOCK OF LONG-EARED OWLS"**--We were lucky to find Long-eared Owls this winter. For many years we have found these owls in cedar and pine windbreaks of occupied and abandoned farms in the broad river valley west of #218 to the Amanas, and once located were quite constant for the winter. But in the past two winters there have been no owls at all in these old reliable places. Naturally, we assumed there were no owls in the area and attributed it to the fact that successive flooding from the Corlville Reservoir had eliminated the rodent population, which no doubt it did.

Then, early in December, a "bow & arrow" deer hunter reported that while following a deer trail through an alder thicket he had flushed "a flock of horned owls" (sic). He also hunts with a camera and had managed to get a picture of one of the birds, which turned out to be a Long-eared Owl, as I predicted. This thicket is an experimental planting in a sandy flat in the Reservoir storage area, now about 8 or 10 feet high in closely planted narrow rows, not easy to walk through, and surely not a place we would have looked for owls. It is near a mound of higher ground which was not under water so perhaps the present mouse supply had erupted from there.



Top--Area in storage flood waters, looking east, Swan Lake at far right.  
Middle--Roost thicket with Dr. Robert Vane.

Photos by the author

Bottom--Long-eared Owl.

Photo by Don Roberts

On our Christmas Count we put people at either end of this 300 yd. patch, and as they walked through there seemed to be owls all over the place, but we were sure of at least 16. We found three well used roosts with much whitewash and heaps of pellets. Some of the pellets were sent to Dr. Milton Weller of ISU, who analyzed 19 as follows: *Peromyscus*, 28%; *Microtus*, 69%; *Mus*, 21%; *Reithrodontomys*, 7%; *Passeriformes*, 3.5%. One was a small locust tree and the others were logs that had been floated in by the high water. Later efforts to photograph them were quite frustrating, trying to penetrate the jungle of branches without flushing them, so about all we would get was a glimpse of them flying away. F. W. KENT, 302 Richards, Iowa City.

FIELD TRIP, MAY 19, 1968--A field trip that was planned last fall with Eldon Bryant of Akron, Iowa, came into being on Sunday morning, May 19. We were making an attempt to locate the Say's Phoebe outside of Plymouth County where Eldon lives. We left Sioux City Sunday morning and drove south to the Brown's Lake area and then east across the hilly area. After many stops and hikes we arrived in the Smithland, Iowa, area. We then proceeded southeast and by way of many side roads arrived at Mapleton in Monona County.

We investigated many likely nesting spots for the Say's Phoebe, but did not observe any during our trip. We did draw some conclusions that the area we covered was not the same as around the Bryant home. The bridges were built mostly of steel and cement in the area we covered and the Say's Phoebe prefers the smaller wooden bridges that are found in the Plymouth County area. The area also was more rolling and hilly, possibly not to their liking. We, of course, covered only a small area of Woodbury and Monona counties, and can not rule out their nesting somewhere else in these counties.

We did find the Eastern Phoebe nesting in an abandoned house and made several more observations of this bird. After the all day trip we did observe about 74 species including several pair of Blue Grosbeaks and a very fine view of a Blackburnian Warbler. Despite a rather cold and windy day, we had a very interesting and enjoyable trip. We plan to continue this study of the Say's Phoebe and its nesting habits at a later time. BOB NICKOLSON, 2314 Helmer St., Sioux City.

## BOOK REVIEWS



**BIRDS OF SOUTH VIETNAM**--Philip Wildash--Charles E. Tuttle Co., Rutland, Vermont--234 p., 25 color plates, 21 line drawings, one map--1968--\$7.50.

Certainly we are all well aware of the geographic position of this country, which is always in the forefront of the news. While most species will be new to Iowa bird watchers a few familiar birds are represented. Many of the birds included have wide ranges in Southeastern Asia. The illustrations are not up to the standard of American guides, but are a big step up from no guide at all.

The author begins with a description of the geography and summary of the ornithological history of South Vietnam. A systematic list of the 586 species covered by the book is very helpful as it includes Latin as well as common



names. The species are discussed in varying detail, with habits, distribution and identification characteristics always covered, the distribution statement being especially brief. A bibliography and glossary of terminology are included but no index was provided. The printing and binding quality are very fine. ed.

THE RAY HARM NATURE SKETCHBOOK--Ray Harm--World Publishing Co., Cleveland-- 138 p. many, sketches, four color plates--1967--\$7.95.

A collection of Ray Harm's drawings with text notes backgrounding the subjects. The book is organized by seasons and covers a wide variety of material including many birds. The author-artist is a resident of Kentucky, where the sketches were done. The drawings are, of course, the center of interest and are nicely done. While this volume contains little text information new to the advanced student it does provide the beginner with fine background for field study. ed.

BIRDS OF HAWAII--George C. Munro--Charles E. Tuttle Co., Rutland, Vermont-- 192 p. 20 color plates, many photographs--1967 (forth printing of revised edition) --\$5.00.

A quite different regional work from the one discussed in the previous review, this volume goes into great detail on many species of native birds. The original edition was published in 1944, so the status of many species has doubtless changed. This is not a serious fault as very little specific status information is included. The bulk of the text discusses native species with brief mention of stray visitants and introductions being made. The plates are, like those in the volume previously reviewed on South Vietnam, below the standard to which most American birders are accustomed, but they do provide an aid for identification as did those of our guides of thirty years ago. The book is indexed and the nomenclature has been updated by a list of changes and corrections.

This volume represents the best single work on Hawaiian birds available today. It is reasonably priced and well bound. One going to Hawaii for a vacation would do well to read it before their trip. The book is written in a lively style and holds one's interest nicely. ed.

COMMON BIRD SONGS--Donald J. Borror--Dover Publications, New York --27 p. booklet and twelve inch recording--1967--\$2.50.

A very fine idea for beginning bird watchers. The record begins with the very distinctive calls and groups similar songs together. The booklet provides black and white illustrations of the species represented as well as comments on the calls. The location and month is listed for each call. Spectrographs are included for 15 of the 60 species, which will enable a beginner to make better use of the Robbin's field guide. The quality of the recording is good and the price is quite reasonable. This record-booklet combination would make a fine gift for someone with a budding interest in birds. ed.

LAND OF A THOUSAND ATOLLS--Irenaus Eibl-Eibesfeldt--World Publishing Co., Cleveland--195 p., 127 color and black and white photos, and one map--1966--\$12.50.

A study of the marine life in the Maldive and Nicobar Islands of the Indian Ocean, translated from German. While birds do not make up a major part of the book many species are mentioned. The color photographs are very fine. The historical background and ethnology of the islands are discussed. The author,

a student of Lorenz, pays particular attention to the behavior and ecology of the reef habitat. The translation has retained a very readable style of the prose, ed.

EXTINCT AND VANISHING BIRDS OF THE WORLD--James C. Greenway, Jr.--Dover Publications, New York--520 p., 86 illustrations--1967--\$3.50--paperbound.

An excellent book, first published in 1958, which has been updated and nicely reprinted. The length of the accounts varies with the importance of the species. The accounts include all common names, status, range, habitat, description, habits, and location of specimens. The introduction breaks down the species into list of extinct, probably extinct, known only from bones or historical records, and vanishing birds. The author also lists birds about which little is known and few specimens exist as well as those which have always been represented by perilously small populations. A long discussion of the geography of extinction is included, which makes very interesting reading. A detailed bibliography is included as well as a list of museums where extinct birds are to be found.

With the pressure being brought to bear on many species of birds, the causes for extinction should serve as an aid to prevent us from making the same errors again. This book should be in all public libraries for the above reason alone, and will be a good addition from all aspects as a fine reference, ed.

## NEW MEMBERS



New members for 1968 joining between February 15 and June 1. All are from Iowa unless otherwise noted.

Charlotte Burns, 611 Eastmoor Dr.  
Iowa City.

Mrs. Edwin G. Cook, 2509 Meadowdale  
Ottumwa.

Larry Deeds, 2202 N. Jefferson, Ot-  
tumwa.

Chad Ellis, 2406 North Court, Ot-  
tumwa.

Diana Gillespey, Rt. 1, Lamoni.

Mrs. G. H. Groth, Rt. 1, Alburnett  
Lynn Johnson, McGregor.

Paul B. Kirk, Box 74, Vincennes,  
Indiana.

Mrs. Frances Eells Miller, 201 W.  
Golf, Ottumwa.

R. Wm. Poulter, 301 S. Van Buren,  
Mt. Pleasant.

Mrs. Richard Scott, 320 E. Lee,  
Seymour.

Phyllis M. Shultz, 2245 Fuller Place,  
Dubuque.

M. Mildred Wilson, 107 S. Willard,  
Ottumwa.

### Reinstated:

Leona L. Havens, 513 N. Court,  
Ottumwa.

Arlo Raim, Dept. of Biology, West-  
ern Michigan U., Kalamazoo, Mich.

### Subscription:

Swen F. Parson Library Periodicals  
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Illinois.